

## **A Guide to Scoring Core Democratic Values When the Issue of Public Policy Involves another Country**

The United States has certain core values which are protected by the Constitution and by law. These Core Democratic Values are the fundamental beliefs and constitutional principles of American society which unite all Americans. It is on these common values that accepted, and in the case of the government legal, interactions between individuals and between individuals and the government are based.

While these values are of great importance to our nation, we must acknowledge that many do not belong to our nation alone. It would be very ethnocentric to believe they did. For example, in the Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson declares that the rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are *inalienable* rights: rights belonging to all people as a result of their being, not rights given or taken away by governments.

Many of the values that we characterize as the core values of our American representative democracy are contained in the constitutions of nations worldwide and are in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

When students write on public policy issues that involve more countries than the United States, they should be guided to consider using *only* the following values which have an acceptance which transcend the boundaries of the United States. *It is not necessary for a student to cite a value’s inclusion in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

Students can avoid the problem of “exporting” core democratic values and constitutional principles by supporting their position with a core democratic value from the following list. All students must still state and support their use of a core democratic value and avoid any suggestion that the United States would be “bestowing” these rights upon the people.

*Should the United Nations demand the use of solar and wind power to lower pollution in developing countries who want their aid?*

While some might say that the United Nations would be improving the health of people and the environment by demanding developing countries who want their aid to use solar and wind power, I say that it is a matter of the core democratic value of justice. If developed countries are allowed to continue to use sources of energy that foul the environment, why should countries unable to afford the development of solar and wind technology be forced to use them? Using these new alternative energy sources would handcuff their development and help the rich to get richer and the poor to remain so.

**Life** The individual's right to life should be considered inviolable except in certain highly restricted and extreme circumstances. One such approved circumstance would be the use of deadly force to protect one's life or the life of others. It would then be acceptable for a government to train soldiers for military service which may put soldiers in harms way. The right to life is not an approbation against the use of capital punishment.

**Liberty** The right to liberty includes *personal freedom*: the private realm in which the individual is free to act, think and believe without government interference; *political freedom*: the right to participate freely in the political process, be governed by the rule of law, the right to a free flow of information and the right to open debate and assembly; and *economic freedom*: the right to acquire, use, transfer and dispose of private property without unreasonable governmental interference, the right to seek and change employment and to engage in lawful economic activity.

**Pursuit of Happiness** The right of citizens to attain happiness so long as they do not infringe on the rights of others: The government has no responsibility to make citizens happy, just the opposite; it is the prohibition against government involvement in an individuals lawful actions to pursue their own happiness.

**Common Good** Individual citizens accept their obligation to promote the welfare of the community and to work together with other members of the community for the greater benefit of all.

**Justice** People should be treated fairly in the distribution of the benefits and burdens of society, the correction of wrongs and injuries, and in the gathering of information and making of decisions.

**Equality** *Political equality*, the right to participate freely in the political process, be governed by the rule of law, the right to a free flow of information and the right to open debate and assembly of citizens, can only be denied through due process of law; *legal equality* protects the right to be treated as an equal before the law; *social equality* prohibits class hierarchy sanctioned by law; and the protection of *economic equality*, the right to acquire, use, transfer and dispose of private property without unreasonable governmental interference, the right to seek and change employment and to engage in lawful economic activity, is necessary to avoid the undermining of other forms of equality.

**Diversity** Variety in culture, ethnic background, race, and belief is not only permissible but beneficial and desirable in society.